NAXOS

AMERICAN OPERA CLASSICS

John ADAMS

Nixon in China

Orth • Kanyova • Hammons • Heller • Dahl
Yuan • Malde • Simson • DeDominici
Colorado Symphony Orchestra • Opera Colorado Chorus
Marin Alsop

3 CDs

John
ADAMS
(b. 1947)

Nixon in China

Opera in Three Acts

Libretto by Alice Goodman (b. 1958)

Richard Nixon . . . . . **Robert Orth**
Pat Nixon . . . . . **Maria Kanyova**
Henry Kissinger . . . . . **Thomas Hammons**
Mao Tse-tung . . . . . **Marc Heller**
Madame Mao (Chiang Ch'ing) . . **Tracy Dahl**
Chou En-lai . . . . . **Chen-Ye Yuan**
1st Secretary (Nancy T'ang) . . **Melissa Malde**
2nd Secretary . . . . . **Julie Simson**
3rd Secretary . . . . . **Jennifer DeDominici**

Opera Colorado Chorus

Douglas Kinney Frost, Chorus Master

Colorado Symphony Orchestra

Marin Alsop

CD 1 — 66:22

Act I, Scene 1

1	Beginning (Orchestra)	2:46
2	“Soldiers of Heaven Hold the Sky” (Chorus)	2:45
3	“The People Are the Heroes Now” (Chorus)	2:51
4	Landing of the Spirit of ’76 (Orchestra)	2:34
5	“Your Flight Was Smooth, I Hope?” (Chou, Nixon)	1:25
6	“News Has a Kind of Mystery” (Nixon, Chou, Kissinger, Chorus)	7:29

Act I, Scene 2

7	Beginning (Mao, Nixon, Chou, Kissinger, Secretaries)	4:19
8	“You Know We’ll Meet with Your Confrère, The Democratic Candidate” (Mao, Nixon, Kissinger)	2:40
9	“You’ve Said That There’s a Certain Well-known Tree” (Chou, Nixon, Mao, Kissinger, Secretaries)	2:48
10	“Founders Come First, then Profiteers” (Mao, Secretaries, Nixon, Chou, Kissinger)	7:25
11	“We No Longer Need Confucius” (Mao, Secretaries)	3:10
12	“Like the Ming Tombs” (Nixon, Secretaries, Mao, Chou)	5:34

Act I, Scene 3

13	Beginning (Nixon, Pat, Chou, Kissinger, Chorus)	6:32
14	“Ladies and Gentlemen, Comrades and Friends” (Chou, Chorus, Pat, Kissinger)	7:00
15	“Mr. Premier, Distinguished Guests” (Nixon, Chorus)	2:48
16	Cheers! (Chorus, Nixon, Chou, Pat, Kissinger)	4:16

CD 2 — 51:04

Act II, Scene 1

1	Beginning (Pat)	3:49
2	“Look Down at the Earth” (Chorus, Pat, Secretaries)	5:51
3	“This Is Prophetic!” (Pat)	7:58
4	“At Last the Weather’s Warming Up” (Pat, Chorus)	3:19

Act II, Scene 2

5	Beginning (Secretaries)	3:02
6	“Oh What a Day I Thought I’d Die!” (Kissinger, Chorus, Secretaries, Pat)	4:41
7	“Whip Her to Death!” (Kissinger, Pat, Nixon)	2:58
8	Tropical Storm (Pat)	4:57
9	“Flesh Rebels” (Chorus)	3:09
10	“I Have My Brief” (Kissinger, Nixon)	1:11
11	“It Seems So Strange” (Chorus, Chiang Ch’ing, Pat, Nixon, Secretaries)	3:02
12	“I Am The Wife of Mao Tse-tung” (Chiang Ch’ing, Chorus)	7:05

CD 3 — 36:27

Act III

1	Beginning (Orchestra)	1:10
2	“Some Men You Cannot Satisfy” (Kissinger, Nixon, Pat, Chou, Chiang Ch’ing)	3:09
3	“I Am No One” (Mao, Chou, Kissinger, Chiang Ch’ing, Pat)	3:47
4	The Maos Dance (Chiang Ch’ing, Mao, Pat, Nixon, Chou)	2:05
5	“Sitting Around The Radio” (Nixon, Pat)	1:17
6	“Let Us Examine What You Did” (Mao, Chiang Ch’ing, Chou)	2:55
7	“When I Woke Up I Dimly Realized The Jap Bombers Had Given Us A Miss...” (Nixon, Pat)	1:22
8	“I Have No Offspring” (Chou, Mao, Chiang Ch’ing)	2:05
9	“I Can Keep Still” (Chiang Ch’ing)	3:14
10	“After That The Sweat Had Soaked My Uniform” (Nixon, Pat, Chiang Ch’ing, Mao, Chou)	2:55
11	“Peking Watches The Stars” (Chiang Ch’ing, Mao)	3:30
12	“You Won at Poker” (Pat, Nixon, Chiang Ch’ing, Mao)	4:02
13	“I Am Old and I Cannot Sleep” (Chou)	4:57

John Adams (b. 1947)

Nixon in China

Few operas written in the last quarter of the twentieth century have withstood the test of time to remain as musically and dramatically vibrant today as they were at their premières. *Nixon in China* is one of a handful of contemporary American operas to achieve celebrity status, having multiple performances during its 1987 première co-commissioned by the Houston Grand Opera, The Brooklyn Academy of Music and The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Through subsequent decades it has been performed nationally and internationally in both concert and fully-staged productions. Now, stage director James Robinson has created a new production of this timeless work presented by Opera Colorado in 2008, co-produced with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Portland Opera, Minnesota Opera, Chicago Opera Theatre and Houston Grand Opera.

Opera Colorado selected this monumental work to be part of its 25th Anniversary Celebration and presented it at Denver's new Ellie Caulkins Opera House during the 2008 National Performing Arts Convention. Opera Colorado worked closely with James Robinson to assemble an internationally recognized cast including Thomas Hammons (Henry Kissinger) from the world première cast of 1987, Robert Orth (Richard Nixon), Maria Kanyova (Pat Nixon), Marc Heller (Mao Tse-tung), Tracy Dahl (Chiang Ch'ing), and Chen-Ye Yuan (Chou En-lai). Conducting superstar Marin Alsop led the Colorado Symphony Orchestra. This new live recording was inspired by Marin Alsop's dedication to performing and promoting major twentieth century works, and produced as a result of the co-operative efforts of Opera Colorado and the Colorado Symphony Orchestra Association.

At the heart of the success of *Nixon in China* is the artistic genius of composer John Adams and librettist Alice Goodman. Early in the creative process, John and Alice held meetings in Washington, D.C. to pore over back issues of news magazines, and tapes of television newscasts and other media coverage surrounding the historic seven days (21st-27th February, 1972) that brought together President Richard M. Nixon and Chairman Mao Tse-tung. The result of these research sessions was the construction of a highly dramatic work whose fabric is a colorful weave of actual events and an intimate look at the personalities of the individuals involved.

John Adams is considered one of America's most admired and respected composers of works spanning the operatic, symphonic, choral and chamber music genres. Influenced by minimalist composers Steve Reich and Philip Glass, Adams has created a distinct style of composition that imaginatively uses the restricted harmonic vocabulary and steady pulse that became the hallmarks of the minimalist movement. Adams has an uncanny talent for recognizing the dramatic possibilities of continually repeating melodies, harmonies and rhythms, and knows exactly when to alter those compositional elements to reflect the dramatic action of each scene. These alterations can sometimes be jarring and at other times be as subtle as to be almost imperceptible.

Librettist Alice Goodman spent painstaking hours collecting translations of Mao's poems, magazine articles, newspaper clippings, photographs and literary works such as Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China*, Agnes Smedley's biography of Chu Teh, and the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, to name a few. Out of this vast research came an epic libretto imbued with eloquence of thought and feeling, giving voice to each character in a highly individualistic way. Through her beautifully crafted couplets, Goodman has brought a depth of meaning to this historic event, allowing the audience to experience history in a new and more revealing way.

Nixon in China is constructed within the framework of conventional opera, beginning with a traditional chorus which builds to the entrance of two of the

principal characters, Richard and Pat Nixon, stepping down the gangway from Air Force One. The first two acts of the opera advance through a series of dramatic exchanges between characters represented in arias and ensembles re-enacting the official meeting between Richard Nixon and Mao Tse-tung, the interactions between Nixon, Kissinger and Premier Chou En-lai, the various speeches which took place at the first evening's banquet, Pat Nixon's tour of numerous points of cultural interest, and the performance of *The Red Detachment of Women*, the revolutionary ballet devised by Chairman Mao's wife Chiang Ch'ing.

In the final act of *Nixon in China,* the six principal characters reflect upon the journey that has brought them to this place and moment in time. Through a series of inner monologues and short dialogues, each character probes the past with humor and pathos to reveal a kinder, gentler, more vulnerable side of their nature. The opera concludes with Chou En-lai's thought-provoking line "How much of what we did was good?"

James Robinson's ground-breaking production views the historic events through the eyes of the media and the millions of television viewers who were mesmerized by the Nixons' historic visit to the People's Republic of China. Collaborating with set designer Allen Moyer and costume designer James Schuette, Robinson brings a sense of shared experience to this new production. The news media footage and historic photos studied by Adams and Goodman become the set as televisions continually loop news footage of the actual events, while the characters simultaneously re-enact each event. The effect on the audience is one of nostalgia and revelation. We not only relive this historic event which undeniably changed the course of world politics, but we also have time to reflect and absorb new insights into the significance of this life-changing event and the individuals whose vision made history.

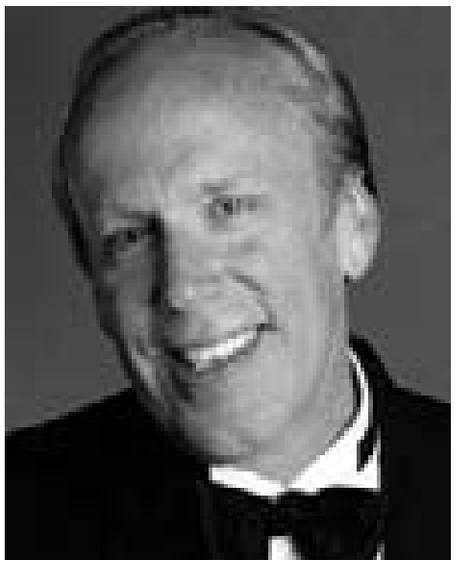
Gregory Carpenter
General Director, Opera Colorado

John Adams

Photo: Margaretta Mitchell

One of America's most admired and respected composers, John Adams is a musician of enormous range and technical command. His many operatic works, including *Nixon in China*, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, and *Doctor Atomic*, stand out among contemporary compositions for their depth of expression and the profoundly humanist nature of their themes. His work, *On the Transmigration of Souls*, written to mark the first anniversary of the World Trade Center attacks, received the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Music. In 2003, a film version of *The Death of Klinghoffer* was released in theaters, on television, and on DVD. Adams has been awarded honorary degrees and proclamations by Cambridge University, Harvard University, Yale School of Music, Phi Beta Kappa, the governor of California, the French Legion of Honor, and Northwestern University, where he was awarded an honorary doctorate and the first Michael Ludwig Nemmers Prize in Music Composition. John Adams is active as a conductor, appearing with the world's greatest orchestras.

Robert Orth (Richard Nixon)



Robert Orth is a leading baritone with major opera companies and symphony orchestras throughout the United States. New York City Opera gave him the Christopher Keene Award for new and unusual repertoire. Among his many contemporary and traditional opera performances, some notable rôles include John Buchanan, Jr., in Lee Hoiby's *Summer And Smoke*, the Lodger in Dominic Argento's *The Aspern Papers,* and the Lecturer in Argento's one-man opera *A Waterbird Talk*. He has created leading rôles in many new operas including the title rôle in the world première of *Harvey Milk* by Stewart Wallace and Michael Korie, Frank Lloyd Wright in *Shining Brow* by Daron Aric Hagen, Owen Hart in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*, Garrison Keillor's opera *Mr. And Mrs. Olson,* Mr. Parkis in Heggie's *The End Of The Affair,* Uncle John in Ricky Ian Gordon's *The Grapes Of Wrath*, and Capt. Compson in *Midnight Angel* by David Carlson. His recordings include Menotti's *The Telephone*, Weisgall's *Six Characters In Search Of An Author*, *Harvey Milk*, *Dead Man Walking,* and Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*.

Maria Kanyova (Pat Nixon)

Photo: Ken Howard

Maria Kanyova has been acclaimed as much for her lustrous singing as for her viscerally enthralling stage performances. Career highlights include Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Florida Grand Opera; Violetta in *La traviata* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Portland Opera; Marie Antoinette in *The Ghosts of Versailles* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Wexford Opera Festival; Nedda in *Pagliacci* at Dallas Opera, New York City Opera; Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* at Los Angeles Opera, Opera Colorado; Mimì in *La bohème* at Houston Grand Opera, Dallas Opera, New York City Opera (PBS telecast); Adina in *L'elisir d'amore* and Tatiana in *Eugene Onegin* at Boston Lyric Opera; Blanche in *The Dialogues of the Carmelites* and Jenůfa in *Jenůfa* at Glimmerglass Opera; Rita in the world première of William Bolcom's *A Wedding* at Lyric Opera of Chicago. She has sung the rôle of Pat Nixon at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Ravinia Festival, Chicago Opera Theatre, and Opera Colorado.

Thomas Hammons (Henry Kissinger)

Photo: Lisa Kohler

Thomas Hammons is acclaimed throughout the world in over forty rôles in the classic *basso buffo* repertoire and in the world of modern music theater. He created the rôle of Henry Kissinger in the world première of *Nixon in China* by John Adams for the Houston Grand Opera in 1987, and his iconic portrayal was subsequently seen in Amsterdam, Paris, Frankfurt, and Los Angeles, along with important revivals at the Cincinnati Opera, Opera Colorado, Canadian Opera Company and Vancouver Opera. His association with John Adams continued in the inaugural production of *The Death of Klinghoffer* at the Opéra de la Monnaie in Brussels, with later performances in Lyon, Vienna, San Francisco and at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Thomas Hammons made his début at the Metropolitan Opera as the Sacristan in *Tosca* during the 1996-1997 season, and has returned to the Met every season thereafter in numerous performances.

Marc Heller (Mao Tse-tung)

Marc Heller has appeared at major opera houses across the United States and Europe, including the Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Opera, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the Macau International Music Festival, Croatian National Opera, Zagreb, and many others in such rôles as Rodolfo, Pinkerton, Cavaradossi, Duca di Mantova, Alfredo, Riccardo, Don José, Romeo (Gounod), Faust (Gounod), Des Grieux (Massenet) and others. He originated the pivotal rôle of Gao Jian-li in the Shanghai workshop of Tan Dun's opera *The First Emperor*. Heller went on to make his Metropolitan Opera début in the rôle opposite Placido Domingo. He appeared as the Prince in the North American première of Tan Dun's *Tea*, with the composer conducting. In 2008 he travelled to China to sing the rôle of Lukas in Haydn's *Die Jahreszeiten* in pre-Olympic ceremonies. Other recordings include *Modinhas e Cançoes* (songs of Heitor Villa-Lobos), *Take Me To The World* (songs of Stephen Sondheim) as well as *Great Poets in Song* and *Rome by Night* (compositions by the late Steve Allen).

Chen-Ye Yuan (Chou En-lai)

Photo: Sandy Wilson

Chen-Ye Yuan has performed the rôle of Chou En-lai in numerous productions including Chicago Opera Theater, Cincinnati Opera, Opera Colorado and Opera Theater of St. Louis, Vancouver Opera and the Canadian Opera Company. His masterful Rigoletto has opened the doors to some of the best venues in the United States and Europe including Welsh National Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Minnesota Opera, San Antonio Opera, Palm Beach Opera, Sacramento Opera, and Houston Grand Opera. Additional rôles include Friedrich Bhaer in *Little Women*, Marcello in *La bohème*, Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, the Dragon King in the world première of *Legend of Yao Ji*, Valentin in Gounod's *Faust*, Renato in *Un ballo in maschera*, Amonasro in *Aida*, and the Speaker in *The Magic Flute*. His performance of Bhaer in Adamo's *Little Women* with Houston Grand Opera was aired on PBS's Great Performances and released on CD.

Tracy Dahl (Madame Mao)

Photo: Lisa Kohler

Tracy Dahl has appeared with opera companies such as the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Santa Fe Opera, and Milan's La Scala. She has performed the rôle of Madame Mao in *Nixon in China* with Houston Grand Opera, Vancouver Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Portland Opera and Opera Colorado. Her repertoire encompasses all the major coloratura rôles: Gilda in *Rigoletto*, Olympia in *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, the title rôle in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Adele in *Die Fledermaus*, Florestine in *The Ghosts of Versailles*, Cunégonde in *Candide*, Oskar in *Un ballo in maschera* and Amor and Eurydice in *Orpheus in the Underworld*, Despina in *Così fan tutte*, Gretel in *Hänsel und Gretel*, and Servilia in *La clemenza di Tito*. Her discography includes *A Disney Spectacular* with the Cincinnati Pops (Telarc), *Glitter and Be Gay* with the Calgary Philharmonic (CBC), *A Gilbert and Sullivan Gala* with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra (CBC), and *Love Walked In*, a Gershwin collection with the Bramwell Tovey Trio (Red Phone Box Company).

Melissa Malde (Nancy T'ang)

Photo: Eric Weber

Melissa Malde has performed with numerous orchestras and opera companies throughout the United States, including Kentucky Opera and the Bangor Symphony. She has sung abroad with the Moscow Chamber Orchestra, with the Prague Radio Symphony, and has also performed in Germany. She holds degrees from Oberlin College and Conservatory, Northwestern University, the University of Cincinnati, and the Hochschule für Musik in Munich, where she studied under the auspices of a German Academic Exchange grant. While in Munich, she won first prize in the Kulturforum Competition. Other honors include winning Cincinnati Conservatory's Concerto Contest, first prize in Chicago's Sudler Oratorio Competition, a Farwell Award, and the Brice-Gooter Award from the NATSAA competition. She is certified as an Andover Educator to teach Body Mapping. Her book on that subject, *What Every Singer Needs to Know About the Body*, was published in 2008 by Plural Publishing. She serves on the faculty of the University of Northern Colorado.

Julie Simson (Second Secretary)

Photo: Eric Weber

Julie Simson has sung with opera companies throughout the United States including Houston Grand Opera, Dallas Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Opera Memphis, and Opera Colorado. She has also performed as soloist in major oratorio works with the Denver, Colorado Springs, Cedar Rapids, Omaha and Milwaukee Symphonies and in Boulder at the MahlerFest and Bach Festival. She won the prestigious Mozart Prize at the International Belvedere Competition in Vienna. After winning First Prize at the East and West Artists International Competition, she made her New York recital début in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. Julie Simson was featured in two concerts at the International George Crumb Festival in Prague in the Czech Republic, and in recital and master-classes at the Hochschule für Musik Hans Eisler in Berlin Germany. Her recordings include Mahler's *Eighth Symphony* with the Colorado MahlerFest and Horatio Parker's *Hora Novissima* on the Albany label, and an American Art Song CD on the songs of Richard Faith. She is currently a Professor of Voice at the University of Colorado-Boulder.

Jennifer DeDominici (Third Secretary)

Photo: Kellie Coughlin

Jennifer DeDominici has performed with Opera Colorado and Central City Opera, and has been an Apprentice Artist with Santa Fe Opera. She was declared a Regional Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and was also one of only eleven singers world-wide chosen to study at Italy's famed EPCASO in 2006, where she studied with renowned Italian musicians Claudia Pinza and Enza Ferrari. She sang the rôles of Mrs. Jones in *Street Scene*, Hänsel in *Hänsel und Gretel*, and Aldonza in *Man of La Mancha*. She also sang the rôle of Sharon Falconer in an excerpt from *Elmer Gantry* for the Opera America National Convention in 2008.

Opera Colorado

Based in Denver, Opera Colorado has been committed to presenting the highest quality live performances of opera in their original languages since 1983. Founded by famed stage director Nathaniel Merrill, the company originally performed in the round in Boettcher Concert Hall. The company is dedicated to enriching the quality of life in Colorado through the presentation of opera performances that inspire audiences and serve the community through education and cultural programs. Over the years, Opera Colorado audiences have enjoyed performances by the best and brightest of the opera world. The company presents both established stars and emerging talent as well as engaging innovative directors and designers to create an annual season of traditional and pioneering opera performances. Since its inception, Opera Colorado has performed in partnership with the Colorado Symphony Orchestra. In 2005, the company moved into the state-of-the-art Ellie Caulkins Opera House inside the historic Quigg Newton Municipal Auditorium at the Denver Performing Arts Complex. Under the leadership of Gregory

Carpenter, the company served as one of the hosts for the National Performing Arts Convention during the spring of 2008. To celebrate this momentous event, Opera Colorado produced director James Robinson's acclaimed new staging of *Nixon in China* at the opera house under the baton of Marin Alsop, Conductor Laureate of the Colorado Symphony Orchestra. The Opera Colorado Chorus is a group of dedicated volunteers who perform under the leadership of chorus master John Baril. For more information about Opera Colorado visit www.operacolorado.org.

Marin Alsop

Photo: Kym Thomson

Music Director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra since 2007, a relationship now extended to 2015, Marin Alsop is the first woman to head a major American orchestra. Currently Conductor Emeritus of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Music Director Laureate of the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, she continues as Music Director of California's prizewinning Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, a post she has held since 1992. The first artist to win both *The Gramophone*'s Artist of the Year award and the Royal Philharmonic Society's Conductor's Award in the same season, Alsop was named to a MacArthur Fellowship and won the Classical Brit Award for Best Female Artist that year – the first conductor to receive this prestigious American honor. Marin Alsop is a regular guest conductor of the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Chicago Symphony and Los Angeles Philharmonic. She can be heard regularly as a commentator on NPR's *Weekend Edition* segment "Marin on Music", and on BBC's Radio 3. Marin Alsop is a native of New York City; she attended Yale University and received her master's degree from the Juilliard School.

Nixon in China

An opera in three acts

Music by John Adams
Libretto by Alice Goodman

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Setting: Peking; February 21 – 27, 1972

Synopsis

Act I

Scene one – The airport outside Peking
It is a cold, clear, dry morning: Monday, February 21, 1972. Contingents of army, navy and air force circle the field and sing "The Three Main Rules of Discipline" and "The Eight Points of Attention." Premier Chou En-lai, accompanied by a small group of officials, strolls onto the runway just as *The Spirit of '76* taxis into view. President Nixon disembarks. They shake hands and the President sings of his excitement and his fears.

Scene two – Chairman Mao's study
An hour later he is meeting with Chairman Mao. Mao's conversational armory contains philosophical apothegms, unexpected political observations and gnomic jokes, and everything he sings is amplified by his secretaries and the Premier. It is not easy for a Westerner to hold his own in such a dialogue.

Scene three – The Great Hall of the People
After the audience with Mao, everyone at the first evening's banquet is euphoric. The President and Mrs. Nixon manage to exchange a few words before Premier Chou rises to make the first of the evening's toasts, a tribute to patriotic fraternity. The President replies, toasting the Chinese people and the hope of peace. The toasts continue, with less formality, as the night goes on.

Act II

Scene one – Mrs. Nixon views China
Snow has fallen during the night. In the morning Mrs. Nixon is ushered onstage by her party of guides and journalists. She explains a little of what it feels like for a woman like her to be First Lady and accepts a glass elephant from the workers at the Peking Glass Factory. She visits the Evergreen People's Commune and the Summer Palace, where she pauses in the Gate of Longevity and Goodwill to sing, "This is prophetic!" Then, on to the Ming Tombs before sunset.

Scene two – An evening at the Peking Opera
In the evening, the Nixons attend a performance of *The Red Detachment of Women,* a revolutionary ballet devised by Mao's wife, Chiang Ch'ing. The ballet entwines ideological rectitude with Hollywood-style emotion. The Nixons respond to the latter; they are drawn to the downtrodden peasant girl – in fact, they are drawn into the action on the side of simple virtue. This was not precisely what Chiang Ch'ing had in mind. She sings "I am the wife of Mao Tse-tung," ending with full choral backing.

Act III

The last evening in Peking.

CD 1: Act I

1 ***Scene one*** *– The airfield outside Peking. It is a very cold, clear morning; Monday, February 21, 1972; the air is full of static electricity. No airplanes are arriving; there is odd note of birdsong. Finally, from behind some buildings come the sounds of troops marching. Contingents of army, navy and air force—120 men of each service—circle the field and begin to sing* The Three Main Rules of Discipline *and* The Eight Points of Attention.

CHORUS
2 Soldiers of heaven hold the sky
The morning breaks and shadows fly
Follow the orders of the poor
Your master is the laborer
Who rules the world with truth and grace
Deal with him justly, face to face
Pay a fair price for all you buy
Pay to replace what you destroy
Divide the landlord's property
Take nothing from the tenantry
Do not mistreat the captive foe
Respect women, it is their due
Replace doors when you leave a house
Roll up straw matting after use
3 The people are the heroes now
Behemoth pulls the peasant's plow
When we look up, the fields are white
With harvest in the morning light
And mountain ranges one by one
Rise red beneath the harvest moon

4 *A jet is heard approaching, touching down and taxiing across the runway. As* The Spirit of '76 *comes into to view, slowing to a stop, Premier Chou En-lai and a small group of officials stroll out to meet it, casting lone shadows in the pale yellow light. A ramp is drawn up to the hatchway. After a pause the door opens and President Nixon stands in the opening for an instant, then begins to descend the ramp, closely followed by the First Lady in her scarlet coat. When the President reaches the middle of the ramp, Premier Chou begins to clap and the President stops short and returns the gesture, according to the Chinese custom. He reaches the bottom step and extends right hand as he walks towards the Premier. They shake hands.*

CHOU
5 Your flight was smooth, I hope?
NIXON
Oh yes.
Smoother than usual I guess.
Yes, it was very pleasant. We
Stopped in Hawaii for a day
And Guam, to catch up on the time.
It's easier that way. The Prime
Minister knows about that. He
Is such a traveler.
CHOU
No, not I;
But as a traveler come home
For good to China, one for whom
All travel is a penance now
I am most proud to welcome you.

As the rest of the American party disembarks, the band strikes up. The Premier introduces the President to the Chinese official entourage, and together they review the massed ranks of the honor guard. All heads turn as they pass. While the introductions are beginning, the President begins to sing, and, as he sings, the joy of anticipated triumph becomes the terrible expectation of failure. The Chinese and American official parties in due course leave the stage. The brilliant sunshine dwindles to the light of incandescent lamps. A telephone rings twice offstage and is picked up offstage. In a moment Henry Kissinger interrupts the President to tell him that Chairman Mao wishes to meet with him.

NIXON
6 News has a kind of mystery:
When I shook hands with Chou En-lai
On this bare field outside Peking
Just now, the whole world was listening.

CHOU
May I …
NIXON
And though we spoke quietly
The eyes and ears of history
Caught every gesture …
CHOU
… introduce …
NIXON
And every word, transforming us
As we, transfixed …
CHOU
… the Deputy
Minister of Security.
NIXON
Made history. [Our shaking hands
Were shaping time. Each moment stands
Out sharp and clear.
CHOU
… Army.] The Minister …
[bracketed lines not set by the composer]
NIXON
On our flight over from Shanghai
The countryside
Looked drab and grey. "Brueghel," Pat said.
"We came in peace for all mankind"
I said, and I was put in mind
Of our Apollo astronauts
Simply …
[CHOU
… of the United States]
NIXON
Achieving a great human dream.
We live in an unsettled time.
Who are our enemies? Who are
Our friends? The Eastern Hemisphere
Beckoned to us, and we have flown
East of the sun, west of the moon
Across an ocean of distrust
Filled with the bodies of our lost;
The earth's Sea of Tranquility.
It's prime time in the U.S.A.
Yesterday night. They watch us now;
The three main networks' colors glow
Livid through drapes onto the lawn.
Dishes are washed and homework done,
The dog and grandma fall asleep,
A car roars past playing loud pop,
Is gone. As I look down the road
I know America is good
At heart. An old cold warrior
Piloting towards an unknown shore
Through shoals. The rats begin to chew
The sheets. There's murmuring below.
Now there's ingratitude! My hand
Is steady as a rock. A sound
Like mourning doves reaches my ears,
Nobody is a friend of ours.
[Let's face it. If we don't succeed
On this summit, our name is mud.
We're not out of the woods, not yet.]
The nation's heartland skips a beat
As our hands shield the spinning globe
From the flame-throwers of the mob.
We must press on. We know we want …
KISSINGER
Mr. President …
NIXON
What?… Oh yes …

7 ***Scene two*** *– The incandescent lamps are the lamps of Chairman Mao's study. They are old-fashioned standard lamps with tasseled shades. Books lie open everywhere, face down or face up. The walls are filled with books, most of them stuffed with long paper bookmarks. Chairman Mao Tse-tung is seated on one of several overstuffed brown slipcovered armchairs arranged in a semicircle. Several Chinese photographers slip into the room, then President Nixon, Premier Chou En-lai and Dr. Kissinger make their entrance. A girl secretary (one of three who will sit on straight chairs behind Mao and sing back-up) takes the Chairman's arm, and he hoists himself out of the chair and advances to shake hands.*

MAO
I can't talk very well. My throat …
NIXON
I'm nearly speechless with delight
Just to be here.
MAO
We're even then.
That is the right way to begin.
Our common old friend Chiang Kai-shek
With all his virtues would not look
Too kindly on all this. We seem
To be beneath the likes of him.
You've seen his latest speech?
NIXON
You bet.
It was a scorcher. Still, he's spit
Into the wind before, and will
Again. That puts it into scale.
You shouldn't despise Chiang.
MAO
No fear of that.
We've followed his career
For generations. There's not much
Beneath our notice.
CHOU
We will touch
On this in our communiqué.

They sit down, and the photographers who have snapped the handshakes continue to photograph them. The Chairman and the President sit next to one another at the center of the semicircle while the Premier sits next to the Chairman and Dr. Kissinger sits next to the President, facing each other, at its ends. The secretaries take their seats behind the Chairman.

MAO
Ah, the philosopher! I see
Paris can spare you then.
KISSINGER
The Chairman may be gratified to hear
He's read at Harvard. I assign
All four volumes.
MAO
Those books of mine
Aren't anything. Incorporate
Their words within a people's thought
As poor men's common sense and try
Their strength on women's nerves, then say
They live.
NIXON
The Chairman's books enthralled
A nation, and have changed the world.
MAO
I could not change it. I'd be glad
To think that in the neighborhood
Of Peking something will remain.
NIXON
Let us turn our talk towards Taiwan,
Vietnam and the problems there, Japan …
MAO
Save that for the Premier.
My business is philosophy.
Now Doctor Kissinger …
KISSINGER
Who me?
MAO
… has made his reputation in
Foreign affairs.
NIXON
My right hand man.
You'd never know to look at him
That he's James Bond.
CHOU
And all the time
He's doing undercover work.
KISSINGER
I had a cover.
MAO
In the dark
All diplomats are gray.
CHOU
Or *gris*
When their work takes them to *Paris*.
KISSINGER
I pull the wool over their …

NIXON
Stop!
MAO
He pulls the wool over their lap.
NIXON
He's a consummate diplomat.
Girls think he's lukewarm when he's hot.
MAO
You also dally with your girls?
NIXON
His girls, not mine.
KISSINGER
He never tells.
CHOU
And this is an election year.

The photographers have finished, and Chou ushers them out into the hall. When he returns he sits a little straighter as do the President and Dr. Kissinger. Only Chairman Mao continues to lean back, his arms over the chair's arms, as the conversation moves on.

MAO
[8] You know we'll meet with your confrère
The Democratic candidate
If he should win.
NIXON
That is a fate
We hope you won't have to endure.
I'd like to make another tour
As President.
MAO
You've got my vote.
I back the man who's on the right.
KISSINGER
Who's *in* the right you mean.
MAO
No, no.
NIXON
What they put forward we put through.
MAO
I like right-wingers: Nixon, Heath …
NIXON
De Gaulle.
MAO
No, not De Gaulle. I'm loath
To file him in that pigeonhole.
KISSINGER
But Germany's another tale.
MAO
We've more than once led the right wing
Forward while textbook cadres swung
Back into goosestep, home at last.
How your most rigid theorist
Revises as he goes along!
NIXON
Now you're referring to Wang Ming,
Chiang, Chang Kuo-tao and Li Li-san.
MAO
I spoke generally. The line
We take now is a paradox.
Among the followers of Marx
The extreme left, the doctrinaire,
Tend to be fascist.
NIXON
And the far right?
MAO
True Marxism is called that by
The extreme left. Occasionally
The true left calls a spade a spade
And tells the left it's right.
CHOU
[9] You've said
That there's a certain well-known tree
That grows from nothing in a day,
Lives only as a sapling, dies
Just at its prime, when good men raise
It as their idol.
NIXON
Not the cross?
MAO
The Liberty Tree. Let it pass.
It was a riddle, not a test.
The revolution does not last.
It is duration … the regime

Survives in that, and not in time.
While it is young in us it lives;
We can save it, it never saves.
KISSINGER
And yours will last a thousand years.
MAO
10 Founders come first, then profiteers.
NIXON
Capitalists?
MAO
Fishers of men.
An organized oblivion.
NIXON
The crane …
MAO
Let us not be misled.
NIXON
The Yellow Crane has flown abroad.
Think of what we have lost and gained
Since forty-nine.
CHOU
The current trend
Suggests that China's future might …
NIXON
Might break the Futures Market.
MAO
That would be a break. No doubt our plunge
Into the New York Stock Exchange
Will line some pockets here and there.
Will these investments be secure?
No. Not precisely.
NIXON
There's the catch.
You don't want China to be rich.
MAO
You want to bring your boys back home.
NIXON
What if we do? Is that a crime?
MAO
Our armies do not go abroad.
Why should they? We have all we need:
New missionaries, businesslike,
Survey the field and then attack,
Promise to change our rice to bread,
And wash us in our brothers' blood,
[And give us beads,] and crucify
Us on a cross of usury.
After them come the Green Berets,
Insuring their securities.
NIXON
Where is the Chinese people's faith?
MAO
The people's faith? Another myth
To sell bonds. It's worked well for you.
The people are determined to
Divide the land to make it whole.
Piecing the broken Golden Bowl
The world to come has come, is theirs.
We cried "Long live the Ancestors!"
Once, it's "Long live the Living!" now.
NIXON
History holds her breath.
MAO
We know
The great silent majority
Will bide its time.
KISSINGER
There you've got me.
I'm lost.
CHOU
The Chairman means the dead.
NIXON
Confucius …
MAO, SECRETARIES
11 We no longer need Confucius.
Let him rot … no curse …
Words decompose to feed their source …
Old leaves absorbed into the tree
To grow again as branches. They
Sprang from the land, they are alike
Its food and dung. Upon a rock
You may well build your tomb, but give
Us the earth, and we'll dig a grave.
A hundred years, and ears may press
Hard to the ground to hear his voice.
Platonic men freed from the caves

Of Pao An want to spend their lives
In the daylight, to hear the sound
Of industry borne on the wind:
The plow breaking the furrow, cloth
Pierced by the needle, giant earth-
Movers, and these men want to work, and
Not turn back, dazzled, to the dark …
Echoes, shadows, and chains. Such men
Will drive away the Yellow Crane
At last, to harness the Yangtze.
Another generation may
Turn up Confucius' China Guard
Waiting in bunkers for their lord.
NIXON
12 Like the Ming Tombs. I think this leap
Forward to light is the first step
Of all our youth, of all nations' youth;
Our duty is to show them both
Their future and our past, the fire
And the noon glare. How they inspire
Our poor dry bones, put us in mind
Of our forgotten dreams! We send
Children on our crusades, we bring
Children our countries, right or wrong.
Then we retire. Fathers and sons,
Let us join hands, make peace for once.
History is our mother, we
Best do her honor in this way.
MAO
History is a dirty sow:
If we by chance escape her maw
She overlies us.
NIXON
That's true, sure,
And yet we still must seize the hour
And seize the day.
CHOU
You overlook
The fact that hands are raised to strike,
Hands are stretched out to seize their kill.
Here where we stand, beyond the pale,
Your outstretched hand, the Russian's wave,
Appear ambiguous. Forgive my bluntness.
[NIXON
There's no reason why
You should trust us. I'll never say
I'll do something I cannot do,
And I'll do more than you can know.
But since you do not know me, please
Don't trust me. Wait. These may be lies.
KISSINGER
I can vouch for the President.]

The Premier has been discreetly glancing at his watch for some time. Now he stands up, and the President and Dr. Kissinger follow his example. Chairman Mao is assisted by his secretaries as he hauls himself up. Walking slowly and talking, they take their leave.

MAO
I'm growing old and soft, and won't
Demand your overthrow.
NIXON
Your life
Is known to all. It's a relief
To think I may be spared.
MAO
I thought
You might be overwhelmed!
NIXON
My feet are firmly planted on the ground,
Like yours, like you I take my stand
Among poor people. We can talk.
MAO
Six Crises isn't a bad book.
NIXON
He reads too much.
CHOU
Ah, who can say?
NIXON
Has study given Chairman Mao
An iron constitution?
MAO
No.
The Chairman sees his visitors offstage and shuffles back to his books.

MAO
Founders come first, then profiteers.
SECRETARIES
Founders come first, then profiteers.

They write it down.

13 ***Scene three*** *– It is the evening of the first day. The Americans are being fêted in the Great Hall of the People. Outside, the roof is outlined by strings of lights, inside there are tables set for nine hundred. Against the far wall a small dais supports a bank of microphones. The American and Chinese flags are pinned against the wall. The President and the First Lady sit on either side of the Premier, their backs to the flags, and gaze across a snowy field of table linen. There is their party, there the newsmen, there the important Chinese. In the distance the vision begins to blur. The atmosphere is convivial; in that huge hall the President feels strangely joyful and lighthearted, as if this were the evening of arrival in heaven. And so the conversation rises and falls throughout the courses of the banquet.*

NIXON
The night is young.
PAT
A long, long trail
Unwinding towards my dreams, uphill
Right to the very last frontier,
And then we're home. I love you dear.
NIXON
You must be worn out.
PAT
No, I washed
And rested, so I feel refreshed.
But you …
NIXON
This air agrees with me.
Wish we could send some to D.C.
I've never felt so good.
PAT
I saw
A snow moon on our way here. Snow!
Snow over China! Think of that!
It makes me shiver.
NIXON
Just you wait
Until the toasting starts. Between
The booze and praise you'll warm up then.
PAT
It may go to my head.
NIXON
And I might be a Russian spy.
PAT
Seriously …
NIXON
You saw the moon
In clouds and forecast snow. Go on.
PAT
Be a peacemaker, Premier Chou.
CHOU
All Mrs. Nixon says is true enough.
The pressure's falling fast.
I feel it in my bones.
NIXON, PAT
At least
This Great Hall of the People stands
Like a fortress against the winds
Whatever their direction. Yet
The west wind heralds spring.
CHOU
I doubt that spring has come.
PAT
Take a deep breath
And you can taste it. It's the truth.
Although there's more snow still to fall
The spring's as good as here.
KISSINGER
Meanwhile we sit together in the cold.
CHOU
Huddled for warmth you mean? But could
We not take some encouragement
From this appearance of détente?
NIXON
He can't hear you. He's miles away.
A Frenchman once observed to me

"At the edge of the Rubicon
Men don't go fishing." I know one
Statesman who thinks a fishing trip
Will help him land the Great White Hope.
CHOU
Intelligence is no bad thing.
NIXON
It's Henry's trump card.
This stuff's strong poison.
CHOU
A universal cure,
Or so we call it over here.

After the third course is finished, Premier Chou rises to toast his American guests.

CHOU, CHORUS, NIXON
Gam bei!
CHORUS
Shh, shh.
CHOU
14 Ladies and gentlemen,
Comrades and friends, we have begun
To celebrate the different ways
That led us to this mountain pass,
This summit where we stand. Look down
And think what we have undergone.
Future and past lie far below
Half-visible. We marvel now
That we survived those battles, took
Those shifting paths, blasted that rock
To lay those rails. Through the cold night
Uncompromising lines of thought
Attempted to find common ground
Where their militias might contend,
Confident that the day would come
For shadow-boxers to strike home.
We saw by the first light of dawn
The outlined cities of the plain,
And see them still, surrounded by
The pastures of their tenantry.
On land we have not taken yet
Innumerable blades of wheat
Salute the sun. Our children race
Downhill unflustered into peace.
We will not sow their fields with salt
Or burn their standing crop. We built
These terraces for them alone.
The virtuous American
And the Chinese make manifest
Their destinies in time. We toast
That endless province whose frontier
We occupy from hour to hour,
Holding in perpetuity
The ground our people won today
From vision to inheritance.
All patriots were brothers once:
Let us drink to the time when they
Shall be brothers again. *Gam bei!*

President Nixon rises to respond.

NIXON
15 Mr. Premier, distinguished guests,
I have attended many feasts
But never have I so enjoyed
A dinner, nor have I heard played
Better the music that I love
Outside America. I move
A vote of thanks to one and all
Whose efforts made this possible.
No one who heard could but admire
Your eloquent remarks, Premier,
And millions more hear what we say
Through satellite technology
Than ever heard a public speech
Before. No one is out of touch.
Telecommunication has
Broadcast your message into space.
Yet soon our words won't be recalled
While what we do can change the world.
We have at times been enemies,
We still have differences, God knows.
But let us, in these next five days
Start a long march on new highways,
In different lanes, but parallel

And heading for a single goal.
The world watches and listens. We
Must seize the hour and seize the day.

President Nixon and Premier Chou toast each other, then Mrs. Nixon. Caught up in the spirit of friendship, the banqueters go from table to table toasting one another.

NIXON
16 This is the hour!
CHOU
Your health!
PAT
And yours!
CHOU
To Doctor Kissinger!
NIXON
Cheers!
KISSINGER
Cheers!
New friends and present company!
NIXON
To Chairman Mao!
CHOU
The U.S.A.!
PAT
Have you forgotten Washington?
CHOU
Washington's birthday!
NIXON
Everyone listen, just let me say one thing.
I opposed China. I was wrong.
KISSINGER
Bottoms up, Mr. President.
PAT
What did you say, Sweetheart? I can't
Catch every word in all this noise.
CHORUS 1
We have at times been enemies.
CHORUS 2
The Chinese people are renowned.
NIXON
Ideas we have entertained …
PAT
"America the Beautiful!"
CHORUS 1
We must broadcast seeds of goodwill.
CHORUS 2
Comrades and friends …
NIXON
… in former years
Grow in a night to touch the stars.
CHORUS
Look down and think what the Chinese
People have done to earn this praise.
KISSINGER
You won't believe how moved I am.
CHORUS
We marvel now.
NIXON
It's like a dream.

CD 2: Act II

1 ***Scene one*** *– It is the morning of February 22, another cold day. Although it is snowing, the First Lady wears no protection for her blonde hair. She has gone off on her own for a sight-seeing trip. Anti-American posters have been torn off walls, market stalls are piled with goods, children in snowsuits wave the flag. Mrs. Nixon is "loving every minute of it." She has just shaken hands with many of the one hundred and fifteen kitchen workers at the Peking Hotel. Ahead on her schedule are the Evergreen People's Commune, the Summer Palace and the Ming Tombs. In the evening there will be the opera. The citizens of Peking, seconded from their factories to clear the streets, look up and smile as the knot of guides and reporters pauses in its progress.*
PAT
I don't daydream and don't look back,
In this world you can't count on luck.
I think what is to be will be
In spite of us. I treat each day

Like Christmas. Never have I cared
For trivialities. Good Lord!
Trivial things are not for me,
I come from a poor family.
CHORUS
[2] Look down, look down,
Look down at the earth, down from the north
The snowstorm comes. Mile after mile
On each side of the ice-locked wall
Vanishes. Far as you can see
You cannot see the land or sky.
PAT
This little elephant in glass
Brings back so many memories.
The symbol of our party,
Prize of our success, our sacred cow
Surrounded by blind Brahmins, slow
Muscle-bound, well-dressed, half-awake,
With Liberty upon her back.
Tell me, is it one of a kind?
THREE SECRETARIES
It has been carefully designed
By workers in our factory.
They can make hundreds every day.
PAT
Wonderful!
CHORUS
Look down at the earth,
A living current moves beneath
Rivers caught in the hand of death,
Serpentine mountains cross the plain
To bask in an uncertain sun,
And elephantine hills rejoice
Advancing towards a sky of ice.
This country is so beautiful;
One fine day you will see it all.

The tour moves away; it is time the First Lady saw the Evergreen People's Commune and its model swine-rearing facilities, People's Clinic, recreation building and school.

THREE SECRETARIES
This is the People's Clinic.
PAT
Ouch!
I think it's sort of rude to watch.
THREE SECRETARIES
"Do not distress yourself," she begs.
She will get well. Come see the pigs.
PAT
I once raised a red-ribbon boar.
CHORUS *(as the press photographers)*
Do you think you could scratch his ear?
Thank you.
PAT
And how was that?
CHORUS
Just fine.
THREE SECRETARIES
Here are some children having fun.
PAT
The children in the U.S.A.
All say hello. I used to be
A teacher many years ago
And now I'm here to learn from you.

Smiling and waving, Mrs. Nixon and her entourage leave the commune and proceed to the next stop on her tour: the Summer Palace where she is photographed strolling through the Hall of Benevolence and Longevity, the Hall of Happiness in Longevity, the Hall of Dispelling the Clouds and the Pavilion of the Fragrance of Buddha. She pauses in the Gate of Longevity and Good Will to sing:

PAT
[3] This is prophetic! I foresee
A time will come when luxury
Dissolves into the atmosphere
Like a perfume, and everywhere
The simple virtues root and branch
And leaf and flower. And on that bench
There we'll relax and taste the fruit
Of all our actions. Why regret
Life which is so much like a dream?
Let the eternal plan resume:

In the bedroom communities
Let us be taken by surprise;
Yes! Let the band play on and on;
Let the stand-up comedian
Finish his act, let Gypsy Rose
Kick off her high-heeled party shoes;
Let interested businessmen
Speculate further, let routine
Dull the edge of mortality.
Let days grow imperceptibly
Longer, let the sun set in cloud;
Let lonely drivers on the road
Pull over for a bite to eat,
Let the farmer switch on the light
Over the porch, let passersby
Look in at the large family
Around the table, let them pass.
Let the expression on the face
Of the Statue of Liberty
Change just a little, let her see
What lies inland: across the plain
One man is marching—the Unknown
Soldier has risen from his tomb;
Let him be recognized at home.
The Prodigal. Give him his share:
The eagle nailed to the barn door.
Let him be quick. The sirens wail
As bride and groom kiss through the veil.
Bless this union with all its might,
Let it remain inviolate.

There's some clapping, then the First Lady is ushered into the limousine for the ride to the Ming Tombs, where ancient Chinese emperors were laid to rest. It is about four o'clock in the afternoon and the warm colored light which precedes sunset in the very early spring illuminates the limestone statues. Or are they sandstone? The First Lady pats the pockmarked leg of an archaic elephant. She has put on her mink hat during the drive. She revels in the quiet—no traffic, no airplanes, no loudspeakers, only the sound of the human voice and the sound of the footsteps on flagstones and new snow.

PAT
4 At last the weather's warming up.
Look! The sky's clear now.
CHORUS
Watch your step.
PAT
I said it would, remember?
CHORUS
Please,
Mrs. Nixon, watch …
PAT
Oh yes.
And look! Another elephant!
Why hello, Jumbo! I was meant
To come here. What a lovely park!
Time for a picnic?
CHORUS 1
They could work stone in those days.
CHORUS 2
Labor was cheap.
CHORUS 1
Men dug their own graves.
CHORUS 2
They rose up like statues covered in the dust
Of their creation
CHORUS 1
Communist elements!
CHORUS 2
Men like these behold
Each revolution of the world.
CHORUS 1
Swimming through space as fish swim through
The sea.
CHORUS 2
Resting in currents.
CHORUS 1
Though they got two bowls of rice a day …
CHORUS 2
The salt was black.
CHORUS 1
They drank white tea.
PAT
It sounds like you remember them.

CHORUS 1 and 2
We should go back now.
PAT
What a shame!

The First Lady takes the arm of her interpreter—a friendly gesture—as the group turns back towards the limousine whose engine has been running for some time. The sun is setting, the west is red and the moon is clearly visible.

5 ***Scene two*** *– The curtain rises to reveal an audience. Madame Mao, in a dark Sun Yatsen suit and black-rimmed men's glasses, sits between the President and Mrs. Nixon, who has changed her scarlet costume for a pastel colored one, and has been exchanging small talk with the Premier, who sits on her other side. We have only few seconds to grasp these details before another curtain rises onstage. Three beautiful young women are chained to posts. The First Lady sits forward a little, as, indeed, does the President. The young women wear rags—and defiantly new ballet shoes. This is the opening of* The Red Detachment of Women. *The dancer in the center, the proudest one, the one most heavily laden with chains, is Wu Ching-hua, the heroine. We understand that they are in the lock-up of an estate on a tropical island. Two women step from their posts and begin a furious dance. Ching-hua stands stock-still. Three contraltos from the chorus sing:*

THREE SECRETARIES
Young as we are
We expect fear,
Every year
More of us bow
Beneath the shadow
Of the next blow.
Down on all fours
Our grandfathers
Swallow abuse
As if by choice
The humble flesh
Kisses the lash,
Spit and polish,
Polish and spit
Blacken the boot
And they submit,
Embrace the foot,
Cushion the kick:
Rabbit and snake
Dance cheek to cheek.
We are awake,
We know these matters,
How the poor debtors
Still sell their daughters,
How in the drought
Men still grow fat
On the profit
Won grain by grain
From other men
Caught in the famine
Who trade their oxen
For a day's ration;
Then the plow goes,
Then tools, then clothes,
At last the land.
Where is he bound,
Naked and stunned?
Hand over hand
He drags his skin.
Look at him grin
He can't complain
Look at that thing
That was his tongue
He won't be long.

Lao Szu, the landlord's factotum, enters, accompanied by a guard. Singing to himself, he fumbles with his keys and Ching-hua's shackles.

KISSINGER *(as Lao Szu)*
6 Oh what a day
I thought I'd die!
That luscious thigh
That swelling breast
Scented and greased,

A sacrifice
Running with juice
At my caress.
She was so hot
I was hard-put
To be polite
When the first cut
—Come on you slut!—
Scored her brown skin
I started in,
Man upon hen!

Ching-hua embraces the other women. They dance while the women in the chorus sing:

CHORUS *(as Ching-hua)*
How thin you are!
If every scar
On this poor back
Could only speak
These walls would crack
This thick-walled heart
Cast in the dirt
Would raise the cry "Hate Tyranny!"

Suddenly she seizes the whip from Lao Szu's hand, brandishes it and kicks him to the ground. Just as the guard lays hands on her, the two women fling themselves on the guard and Lao Szu. Ching-hua escapes.

THREE SECRETARIES *(as Ching-hua)*
The land outside
This cell is red,
Running with blood,
Hot in the sun
We have not seen
Not until now.
Now let me through!
PAT
Doesn't he look like you-know-who!

At once the scene changes to the coconut grove. Mercenaries in battle-dress run, crouching slightly, through the clearing. Ching-hua enters, dancing. She is quick and wary and eludes the dispersing troops.

CHORUS *(as Ching-hua)*
Can't find the path …
Must find the path …

She collides with Lao Szu. They stare. He torments her with his cane. The mercenaries reenter.

KISSINGER *(as Lao Szu)*
[7] Whip her to death!
PAT
They can't do that!
NIXON
It's just a play.
She'll get up afterwards, you'll see.
Easy there, Hon.
KISSINGER *(as Lao Szu)*
Whip her to death!
PAT
It's terrible! I hate you both!
Make them stop, make them stop!
NIXON
Sweetheart,
Leave them alone, you might get hurt.

The First Lady rushes onstage. The President, who has reluctantly followed her, holds her by the shoulders as Ching-hua is beaten insensible. She has resisted to the last.

KISSINGER *(as Lao Szu)*
This is the fate
Of all who set
Small against great.
Leave it to rot.
[8] *The sky looks ominous. Tyrant, factotum and mercenaries all retreat in the face of a tropical storm. Rain pelts down. The coconut palms bow like grass. The President and the First Lady stand onstage with the body of Ching-hua, the recumbent dancer. He is stunned, she is rapt, they are both soaked to the skin.*

[NIXON
There there, there there.
Jesus it's wet. What would I do without you, Pat?]

As quickly as it rose the wind dies down and with it the rain. Party Representative Hung Chang-ching enters on a scouting mission. Together he and Mrs. Nixon raise Ching-hua to her feet.

PAT
Thank God you came. Just look at this!
Poor thing! It's simply barbarous!
"Whip her to death!" he said. I'd like
To give his God-damned whip a crack!
Oh Dick! You're sopping!

Hung is filled with deep Proletarian feeling for this peasant's daughter who has suffered so bitterly. He offers her a glass of orange juice. It is the first act of kindness she has ever known. Trembling, she raises the glass with both hands and drinks. Then the clouds part, the sky is filled with a blaze of light and the full detachment of the Red Women's Militia enters in formation and unfurls its banners. Entry March of the Women's Company. *Hung points to the company and to the flags waving in the rain-washed air, inviting Ching-hua to join her fellow workers and peasants in the People's Army. Everyone cheers as Hung presents her with a rifle, and she joins her new comrades in a spirited drill.* Target Practice and Bayonet Dance.

CHORUS *(as Militia)*
9 Flesh rebels
The body pulls
Those inflamed souls
That mark its trials
Into the war.
Arm this soldier!
Rise up in arms!
Tropical storms
Uproot the palms
Ending their sway.
The Red Army
Showed us the way.
From the scorched earth
People step forth
Over dead wood
And over the dead:
Follow their lead.
The hand grenade
Beats in the chest
Let the heart burst,
Let the clenched fist
Strike the first blow
For Chairman Mao
And overthrow
The tyrant, and
Share out the land.
Share out the land,
Unclench the fist,
Let the heart burst
And sow broadcast
The dragon's teeth
Your kin and kith
Seed of your seed
Your flesh and blood.

The scene changes to the courtyard of the tyrant's mansion. Sleek Kuomintang officers, political bosses and well-fed farmers celebrate their host's birthday. Waiters pour wine as the guards display their military training. Dance of the Mercenaries. *Hung enters, dressed as a foreign merchant. He is accompanied by the President who presents the doorman with a red-and-gilt card. Lao Szu rushes to greet the exotic guests.*

KISSINGER *(as Lao Szu)*
10 I have my brief
I flatter myself
I know my man
The *sine qua non*
The face on the coin
You see what I mean
The empire builder
The man with his shoulder
Against the roulette wheel:

He stands like a stone wall
And stinks of success.
I'm here to liaise
With the backroom boys
Who know how to live.
And me, I contrive
To catch a few crumbs …
The ringleaders' names
The gist of their schemes …
Loose change.
NIXON
Here friend, something for you.
You're talking like a real pro.

The President hands a few coins to Lao Szu, and Hung tosses a handful of small change to the guards, who scramble on the ground and fight among themselves. Embarrassed, Lao Szu orders his men to fetch the entertainment. A number of serving girls enter, dressed mostly in flowers. They are members of the Red Women's Militia. The guards compel them to dance. Grimly the girls begin to execute a colorful Li Nationality Dance. *Only one of them allows her anger to break the surface. It is Ching-hua. Her eyes sweep the crowded courtyard, resting briefly on Lao Szu. Madame Mao has risen from her chair in the audience. She raises one hand and points to Ching-hua.*

CHORUS *(as Ching-hua)*
11 It seems so strange
To take revenge
After so long
To find the wrong
Can be undone.
The silent gun
Warms in my hand
Salving the wound
Made by the men
It will gun down
All in good time
I shall kill them
Yes, every one
Revenge is mine.

CHIANG CH'ING
That is your cue.

Ching-hua produces an automatic pistol and fires two shots. But it was not her cue. The company is stunned.

PAT
She's started shooting, Dick.
NIXON
I know.
CHIANG CH'ING
What are you gaping at?
CHORUS
Oh no!
CHIANG CH'ING
Forward Red Troupe! Annihilate
This tyrant and his running dog!
NIXON
Oh no!
CHIANG CH'ING
Throw off those stupid rags!
Advance and fire! Fix bayonets!
The worms are hungry! Must the fruits
Of victory rot on the vine?
[PAT
Is Henry okay?
NIXON
Christ, he's gone.]

The three contraltos, joined by Hung, severely rebuke Ching-hua and disarm her. She is deeply distressed. For a moment Madame Mao, standing in their midst, seems almost left out. Then she shoulders them aside and begins to sing.

THREE SECRETARIES
Are you one of us?
You are what you choose.
Your paradise
Begins and ends
In open wounds
And self-abuse
Where your heart is.

Your sacred heart
Is rotten meat;
Your little treasure
Your precious flower
Your sweet revenge.
Nothing can change
Without discipline
Give me that gun.
CHIANG CH'ING
12 I am the wife of Mao Tse-tung
Who raised the weak above the strong
When I appear the people hang
Upon my words, and for his sake
Whose wreaths are heavy round my neck
I speak according to the book.
When did the Chinese people last
Expose its daughters? At the breast
Of history I sucked and pissed,
Thoughtless and heartless, red and blind,
I cut my teeth upon the land
And when I walked my feet were bound
On revolution. Let me be
A grain of sand in heaven's eye
And I shall taste eternal joy.
CHORUS
Joy! Joy! Joy!
CHIANG CH'ING
I am the wife of Mao Tse-tung
Who raised the weak above the strong
When I appear the people hang
Upon my words, and for his sake
Whose wreaths are heavy round my neck
I speak according to the book.
CHORUS
I speak according to the book.

The people express their bitterness against counterrevolutionary elements.

CD 3: Act III

1 *It is the last night in Peking. The President is very, very tired: the lights do not flatter him. The First Lady looks fragile and heavily powdered. Madame Mao is smaller than they had remembered her. And Chou En-lai seems old and quite worn out. Only Chairman Mao appears at his best, full of the joy of youth and the hope of revolution in his picture on the wall. Dr. Kissinger is impatient. He scratches the back of his neck, his nose and his ear.*

KISSINGER
2 Some men you cannot satisfy.
NIXON
That's what I tell them.
KISSINGER
They can't say you didn't tell them.
NIXON
It's no good.
All that I say is misconstrued.
Your lipstick's crooked.
PAT
Is it? Oh.
There isn't much that I can do,
Is there? Who's seen my handkerchief?
CHOU
Please accept mine.
CHIANG CH'ING
I've heard enough.
Who chose these numbers?
KISSINGER
All of us.
Doesn't she like the people's choice?
NIXON
Now for a solo on the spoons.
PAT
I like it when they play our tunes.
CHIANG CH'ING
This should be better. Hit it boys!
PAT
Oh! California! Hold me close.
MAO
3 I am no one.
CHOU
We fight, we die,
And if we do not fight, we die.

KISSINGER
That's how it goes.
MAO
I am unknown.
Give me a cigarette.
CHIANG CH'ING
Come down.
Give me your hand, old man.
MAO
Why not?

She takes his hand and he climbs out of the portrait's background.

CHOU
And to what end? Tell me.
KISSINGER
Premier, please, where's the toilet?
CHOU
Through that door.
KISSINGER
Excuse me for one moment, please.

Kissinger exits at the double.

CHOU
We saw our parents' nakedness;
Rivers of blood will be required
To cover them. Rivers of blood.
PAT
I squeezed your paycheck till it screamed,
There was the rent, there were those damned
Slipcovers, and the groceries.
NIXON
You made that place a home.
PAT
That place was heaven next to this.

Mao and Chiang Ch'ing begin to dance.

[NIXON
You should
Think positive. Try not to brood.
PAT
The trouble was, we moved too much.
We should have stayed put, Dick.]
CHIANG CH'ING
4 We'll teach these motherfuckers how to dance!
[CHOU
It makes me sick.]
MAO
We did this once before.
CHIANG CH'ING
Oh? When?
MAO
It was the time
That tasty little starlet came
To infiltrate my headquarters.
CHIANG CH'ING
Go on!
MAO
What did she call herself? Lan P'ing?
CHIANG CH'ING
You named me. I was very young.
PAT
I thank my lucky stars
I kept those letters that you wrote
From the Pacific. Seems like that
Was the best time of all; you had
My picture, and each night I read
Your mind.
MAO
You were a little fool.
CHIANG CH'ING
And your best pupil.
MAO
Revolution is a boys' game.
NIXON
What an idealist.
There was so much I couldn't tell.
CHOU
A bankrupt people repossessed
The ciphers of its history
And not one character could say
Whether the war was over yet
Or if they'd written off the debt.

In Yenan we were just boys.
MAO
Revolution is a boys' game.
CHOU
I have grown old
And done no more work than a child.
NIXON
There was so much I couldn't tell.
PAT
Such as?
NIXON
5 Sitting around the radio
With the enlisted men, I knew
My time had come. The signal cleared
Transmitting nothing like a word.
There was a cross round one guy's neck.
I noticed that.
PAT
You told me, Dick.
NIXON
The corrugated metal roof
Shook in the rain. The men were safe.
I said goodbye to you then, Pat.
PAT
Did you?
NIXON
Then I began to wait.
The rain seeped in under the door.
The lights went out.
PAT
You told me, dear.
NIXON
That was the time I should have died.
MAO
6 Let us examine what you did.
We led a quiet life, we grew
Stronger, we walked behind the plow,
And as we worked year after year
The yellow dust that filled the air
Softened the Buddha's well-known face
And made him seem like one of us.
CHIANG CH'ING
We ate wild apricots.
CHOU
The taste is still in my mouth.
CHIANG CH'ING
Once we had roast chicken with peppers.
MAO
And a light film of dust settled on each plate.
Your few subjectivist mistakes
Only confirm Mythology's eternal charm;
Roused from a state of seeming rest
Its landscape offers up the ghost...
CHIANG CH'ING
Small lizards basked among the rocks,
Warm as your hand.
MAO
An ancient tactical retreat,
Retrenched in the inanimate.
These things were men.
NIXON
7 When I woke up
I dimly realized the Jap
Bombers had given us a miss …
[It was the weather I suppose.]
PAT
Thank heaven for that.
NIXON
Then I went out.
Already it was getting hot,
A cloud of steam rose from the base
Just like a Roman sacrifice.
PAT
I never doubted you'd come back.
I always knew.
NIXON
I felt so weak
With disappointment and relief
Everything seemed larger than life.
CHOU
8 I have no offspring. In my dreams
The peasants with their hundred names,
Unnamed children and nameless wives
Deaden my footsteps like dead leaves;
MAO
Your few subjectivist mistakes
Only confirm Mythology's eternal charm;
Roused from a state of seeming rest
Its landscape offers up the ghost
An ancient tactical retreat,
Retrenched in the inanimate.

Saved from our decays
Admire that perfect skeleton,
CHOU
No one I killed, but those I saw
Starved to death.
MAO
Those veins, that skin like cellophane.
Take them and press them in a book.
Dare we behave as if the meek
Will mark the places of the wise?
CHOU
Only they can tell
How the land lies, where the pitfall
Was excavated, the mines laid …
CHIANG CH'ING
The masses stride ahead of us.
We follow:
MAO
The instant before bombs explodes
Intricate struggles coexist
Within an entity, embraced
Till they ignite.
CHIANG CH'ING
[9] I can keep still,
I can say nothing for a while,
While the sparks die high in the air
The sun moves on. Nothing I fear
Has ever harmed me, why should you?
Marshal your forces, I'll lie low
The drought has made me thin and strong.
When they took off their coats and hung
Them over branches, and the pick
Scraped the eroded ground, I shook
With pure excitement.
CHIANG CH'ING
[10] (I can keep still,
I can say nothing for a while,
While the sparks die high in the air
The sun moves on. Nothing I fear
Has ever harmed me, why should you?)
NIXON
After that …
PAT
A penny for your thoughts.
NIXON
The sweat had soaked my uniform,
[My hair dripped down my forehead …]
PAT
Did it dear?
NIXON
I began to take in all the sights.
PAT
You've always suffered terribly
From nervous perspiration.
NIXON
Picture a thousand coconuts
Like mandrills' heads or native masks,
Milk oozing from their broken husks,
The flooded rib of a palm frond
Where several centipedes had drowned,
Unsanded wood that smelled like meat …
Jesus, it grabbed you by the throat.
PAT
Wonder what I was doing then?
Dressing up as if you'd walk in.
At any moment.
CHIANG CH'ING
(When they took off their coats and hung
Them over branches, and the pick
Scraped the eroded ground, I shook
With pure excitement.)
NIXON
The war was dislocated.
PAT
Go on, dear.
Don't let me interrupt.
NIXON
Hold a shell
Up to your ear. Guadalcanal
Sounds distant, roughly like the sea.
CHOU
The east is red;
As we ride eastwards to Peking
Preoccupied with our last long
Triumphal march, the early light
Embalms each soldier on the route.
MAO
As they advance we melt away
Into the underbrush; we strike
While they're asleep, a single spark
Sets them alight. Cast the net wide
And draw it in.
[MAO
Well said!]

CHIANG CH'ING
11 Peking watches the stars,
Nanking sleeps naked. Murderers
Stretch out in doorways in Shanghai.
MAO
As we ride eastwards to Peking
I shut my eyes and, listening
Hard, hear the old harmonium
We left behind.
CHIANG CH'ING
Chungking's old-fashioned armory
Lies undefended. Yenan rests
Like a wise virgin.
MAO
I … I … I dream
That schools of small transparent fish
Race down a shallow river.
CHIANG CH'ING
All the coasts
Are clear, and all the oceans still
As we ride eastwards…
CHOU
… to Peking
MAO
We recoil from victory and all its works.
What do you think of that, Karl Marx?
Speak up!
[CHIANG CH'ING
Hush.]
PAT
12 You won at poker.
NIXON
I sure did.
I had a system. Five card stud
Taught me a lot about mankind.
Speak softly and don't show your hand
Became my motto.
PAT
Tell me more.
NIXON
Well, the Pacific theater
Was not much to write home about.
PAT
Yes, dear. I think you told me that.
I read it while I did my hair
And put it in my stocking drawer
With all the others.
NIXON
I was "Nick."
I must have told you that.
Christ, it was beautiful. I swapped
Spam for hamburger meat and roped
In a few men to rig a stand.
CHIANG CH'ING (*lontano*)
We should go underground.
The revolution must not end.
NIXON
They called it "Nick's Snack Shack." I found
The smell of burgers on the grill
Made strong men cry.
PAT
Yes, Dick.
CHIANG CH'ING, MAO (*lontano*)
The revolution must not end.
NIXON
Now, Bougainville
Was a refueling stop …
PAT
I know.
Each fighter pilot that came through
Got a free burger and a beer.
NIXON
Done to a turn; [medium-rare,]
Rare, medium, well-done, anything
You say. The Customer is King.
Sorry, we're low on relish. Drinks?
This is my way of saying thanks.
CHOU
13 I am old and I cannot sleep
Forever, like the young, nor hope
That death will be a novelty
But endless wakefulness when I
Put down my work and go to bed.
How much of what we did was good?
Everything seems to move beyond
Our remedy. Come, heal this wound.
At this hour nothing can be done.
Just before dawn the birds begin,
The warblers who prefer the dark,
The cage-birds answering. To work!
Outside this room the chill of grace
Lies heavy on the morning grass.

NAXOS Soloists • Colorado Symphony Orchestra • Opera Colorado Chorus • Alsop 8.669022-24

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NAXOS

John
ADAMS
(b. 1947)

Nixon in China (1987)

Opera in Three Acts
Libretto by Alice Goodman

Richard Nixon . . . . . Robert Orth
Pat Nixon . . . . . Maria Kanyova
Henry Kissinger . . . . . Thomas Hammons
Mao Tse-tung . . . . . Marc Heller
Madame Mao (Chiang Ch'ing) . . . Tracy Dahl
Chou En-lai . . . . . Chen-Ye Yuan
1st Secretary (Nancy T'ang) . . Melissa Malde
2nd Secretary . . . . . Julie Simson
3rd Secretary . . . . . Jennifer DeDominici

Opera Colorado Chorus
Douglas Kinney Frost, Chorus Master

Colorado Symphony Orchestra
Marin Alsop

CD 1	66:22	CD 2	51:04	CD 3	36:27
1-16	Act I	1-12	Act II	1-13	Act III

A full track and cast list can be found on pages 2 to 4 of the booklet. The libretto is also included.

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American flag, folk artist, 1880s.

AMERICAN OPERA CLASSICS

A longtime collaborator of John Adams and champion of his music, Marin Alsop directs this live recording of Opera Colorado's 25th Anniversary Celebration production of *Nixon in China*, presented at Denver's new Ellie Caulkins Opera House during the 2008 National Performing Arts Convention, and featuring an internationally recognized cast. Alice Goodman's epic libretto and John Adams's distinctive music weave together a colorful fabric of actual events from President Nixon's historic visit to the People's Republic of China with intimate examinations of the opera's real life characters. The spectacle, drama, humor and pathos of this masterpiece remain as compelling today as when the opera was premièred in 1987.

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